

IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) ~~Cutting~~ A cutting element as used in an electric shaver, manufactured from maraging or precipitation-hardenable stainless steel with a surface hardened by plasma nitriding, ~~characterized in that wherein the cutting element is hardened by the plasma nitriding on all surfaces of the blade, and a plasma nitriding hardened layer consist of cutting element to form a surface top layer of steel supersaturated with nitrogen and a diffusion layer adjoining the top layer with a hardness ranging from the hardness of the top layer to the hardness of the steel before hardening by means of the plasma nitriding, wherein the top layer has a substantially uniform hardness and the diffusion layer has a decreasing hardness with depth of the diffusion layer, the~~

decreasing hardness of the diffusion layer decreasing from an outer portion of the diffusion layer toward a center of the diffusion layer.

2. (Currently Amended) ~~Cutting~~ The cutting element as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterized in that the~~ wherein a thickness of the hardened supersaturated top layer ranges from 5 μm to 25 μm .

3. (Currently Amended) ~~Cutting~~ The cutting element according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that the~~ wherein a thickness of the diffusion layer ranges from 5 μm to 20 μm .

4. (Currently Amended) ~~Cutting~~ The cutting element according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the hardness of the hardened supersaturated top layer is at least 1300 HV.

5. (Currently Amended) ~~Cutting~~ The cutting element according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the cutting element is designed for use in a shaver of the dry shaver type.

6. (Currently Amended) ~~Cutting~~ The cutting element according to claim 1, characterized in that the cutting element is designed for use in a shaver of the additive shaver type.

7. (Currently Amended) ~~Electric~~ An electric shaver comprising at least one of the ~~cutting elements according to claim 1~~ element, the cutting element being hardened by plasma nitriding on all surfaces of the cutting element to form a surface top layer of steel supersaturated with nitrogen and a diffusion layer adjoining the top layer with a hardness ranging from the hardness of the top layer to the hardness of the steel before hardening by the plasma nitriding, wherein the top layer has a substantially uniform hardness and the diffusion layer has a decreasing hardness with depth of the diffusion layer, the decreasing hardness of the diffusion layer decreasing from an outer portion of the diffusion layer toward a center of the diffusion layer.

Claims 8-9 (Canceled)

10. (Currently Amended) An electric shaver, comprising:

a stainless steel cutting element having a plasma nitride hardened layer on all surfaces of a blade, wherein the hardened layer includes a surface top layer of steel supersaturated with nitrogen and a diffusion layer adjoining the top layer with a hardness ranging from the hardness of the top layer to the hardness of the stainless steel before hardening, wherein the top layer has a substantially uniform hardness and the diffusion layer has a decreasing hardness with depth of the diffusion layer, the decreasing hardness of the diffusion layer decreasing from an outer portion of the diffusion layer toward a center of the diffusion layer.

11. (Currently Amended) ~~An~~ The electric shaver as claimed in claim 10, wherein ~~the~~ a thickness of the hardened supersaturated top layer ranges from approximately 5 μm to approximately 25 μm .

12. (Currently Amended) ~~An~~ The electric shaver as claimed in

claim 10, wherein ~~the~~ a thickness of the diffusion layer ranges from approximately 5 μm to approximately 20 μm .

13. (Currently Amended) ~~An~~ The electric shaver as claimed in claim 10, wherein the hardness of the hardened supersaturated top layer is at least 1300 HV.

14. (Currently Amended) ~~An~~ The electric shaver as claimed in claim 10, wherein the shaver is a dry shaver.

15. (Currently Amended) ~~An~~ The electric shaver as claimed in claim 10, wherein the shaver is an additive shaver.

16. (Currently Amended) ~~An~~ The electric shaver as claimed in claim 10, wherein the shaver comprises a plurality of cutting elements.

17. (Currently Amended) A method comprising the acts of:
forming a cutting element from austenitic stainless steel; and

plasma nitriding the cutting element on all surfaces ~~at a~~
~~layer to a hardness of at least 1100 HV to form a first layer~~
having a substantially uniform hardness and a second layer having a
decreasing hardness with depth of the second layer, the decreasing
hardness of the second layer decreasing from an outer portion of
the second layer toward a center of the second layer.

18. (Currently Amended) A The method as claimed in claim 17,
further comprising the act of:

after forming the cutting element, precipitationally hardening
the austenitic stainless steel prior to or simultaneously with the
plasma nitriding act.

19. (New) The cutting element of claim 1, wherein a minimum
hardness of the diffusion layer is substantially at a center of the
diffusion layer.

20. (New) The cutting element of claim 1, wherein a first
decreasing hardness of a first side of the diffusion layer meets a

second decreasing hardness of a second side of the diffusion layer substantially at a center of the diffusion layer.

21.(New) The cutting element of claim 1, wherein a first decreasing hardness of a first side of the diffusion layer overlaps with a second decreasing hardness of a second side of the diffusion layer, the first side being opposite the second side.

22.(New) The method of claim 17, wherein a minimum hardness of the second layer is substantially at a center of the second layer.

23.(New) The method of claim 17, wherein a first decreasing hardness of a first side of the second layer meets a second decreasing hardness of a second side of the second layer substantially at a center of the second layer.

24.(New) The method of claim 17, wherein a first decreasing hardness of a first side of the second layer overlaps with a second

decreasing hardness of a second side of the second layer, the first side being opposite the second side.